

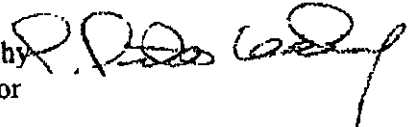
# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
Office of the Director  
Reston, Virginia 20192

## MEMORANDUM

DEC 19 2005

To: Assistant Secretary - Water and Science

From: P. Patrick Leahy   
Acting Director

Subject: National Geospatial Technical Operations Center Decision Process Review Team

I am transmitting to you the enclosed report from the National Geospatial Technical Operations Center (NGTOC) Decision Process Review Team. After careful consideration of the written documentation and interviews with principal participants in the site selection process, the Review Team concluded that

... the process leading to the site selection for NGTOC was open, fair, and adequate to support the decision.

The team also found that

... weaknesses in the coordination of internal communications throughout much of the process leading to the announcement of a site selection contributed to employees having assumptions and expectations not supported by the full documentation and those communications could have been improved.

### Background

As you know, in August 2004, the National Geospatial Programs Office (NGPO) was formed within the Geospatial Information Office (GIO) of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to unify the various geospatial activities for which USGS is responsible and has a leadership role. In January 2005 the NGPO announced the decision to consolidate the four major mapping centers located in Reston, Virginia; Rolla, Missouri; Lakewood, Colorado; and Menlo Park, California, and other geospatial production activities into the NGTOC.

Earlier this year, a business strategy for the NGTOC was developed to define Center responsibilities, establish an organizational structure, and consider opportunities for programmatic and physical consolidation. A preliminary planning team was formed to examine the feasibility of competitively sourcing NGTOC functions. The team was also asked to develop

site criteria they felt should be considered in determining which of the four major mapping centers would serve as the consolidated NGTOC location.

After considering the business strategy, a business case analysis developed for the competitive sourcing scoping study, input from USGS employees and external partners, and her own professional expertise and vision for the NGTOC, the Associate Director for Geospatial Information (AD-GI) Karen Siderelis announced, with my concurrence, in September 2005, that she would proceed with a competitive sourcing study of NGTOC, according to policy established under Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, Performance of Commercial Activities. At that time, Ms. Siderelis, with my concurrence, also announced that the mapping center at the Denver Federal Center, Lakewood, Colorado, had been selected as the NGTOC consolidation site.

Subsequent to the September 2005 announcement, questions were raised about the decision process for locating the consolidated NGTOC at the Denver Federal Center. On October 21, you requested that the USGS put a hold on the implementation of the decision to locate the NGTOC at the Denver Federal Center, and directed an internal review of the decision process in light of the questions raised about that process. At that time, I directed that no further actions be taken to implement the location decision and the A-76 competitive sourcing study pending the outcome of this review. On October 26, I announced that I had convened a team, chaired by Eastern Regional Director Suzette Kimball, to review the process leading to the NGTOC site selection and to assess whether the process was open, fair, and adequate to support the decision. The attached report is the result of that review.

### Findings

As noted above, the team found that "the process leading to the site selection for NGTOC was open, fair and adequate to support the decision." Specifically, the team concluded that:

- The selection factors leading to the site selection were appropriate.
- The selection factors were reasonably applied.
- The process was logical, fair and transparent.
- The process and decision are supported by the existing record.
- The process and decision were adequately communicated in a fair, accurate, and transparent manner.

## Discussion

I would like to address in more detail a few specific matters including why a decision was made to identify the site for the consolidated NGTOC before a competitive sourcing study was completed.

The original recommendation of the NGTOC Business Strategy was to allow the competitive sourcing process to determine the eventual site location of the consolidated NGTOC. However, according to the Business Scoping and Strategy Team (BSST), "subsequent discussions with managers, employees, human resources staffs, and within the NGTOC BSST have resulted in consensus that it would be advantageous, especially from the perspective of affected employees, to make a decision on where the NGTOC would be located, rather than to let the competitive process drive that decision." (Appendix D) Selecting the site in advance offered more certainty for employees who may be affected by the consolidation, and offered the potential for a stronger internal Most Efficient Organization proposal. I have attached to this memo a brief synopsis of the pros and cons for site selection outside of the competitive sourcing process.

Once the decision was made to select a site before beginning the competitive sourcing process, a plan for identifying and evaluating site criteria was developed. Many of the questions that have been raised about the decisionmaking process referenced documents that were developed both prior to and as part of this planning exercise, and which the Review Team found were misinterpreted as definitive site recommendations. One of these referenced documents was the Business Case Analysis for the competitive sourcing study, prepared by the contractor, Management Analysis, Inc. (MAI), which recommends that the A-76 competitive sourcing study be conducted at a single site but did not specify a location. After a thorough review of the document and the statement of work and contracts for MAI, the Review Team verified that "no site selection recommendation exists in the MAI document."

Another document, the BSST spreadsheet of recommended criteria for site selection, the Review Team found was intended to be a tool for the AD-GI in her deliberations for a final site selection. While a version of the spreadsheet that categorized and weighted the site criteria with example scores was developed and eventually made public, it reflected only one scenario of weights and scoring, and did not reflect the priorities and the professional judgment of the AD-GI and the bureau directorate. In fact, as the Review Team report states, "in no instance did any individual indicate that he/she believed the BSST's work was anything more than information for the AD-GI." The Review Team found that this spreadsheet was perceived as a particularly influential product rather than one among the many used to decide the site for the consolidated NGTOC.

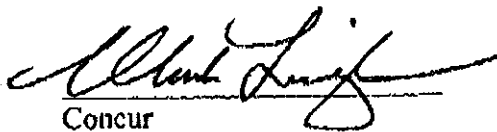
Questions have been raised about the application of site criteria to determine the best location for the NGTOC. The Review Team found that "no predetermined outcome was evident in the record or from our conversations with many individuals and that every site had an equal opportunity for consideration based on data and information about the site." The Review Team does note that both quantitative data such as the NGTOC Site Criteria developed by the BSST,

and qualitative data such as the weights given to various specific criteria, were applied in the decisionmaking process. The AD-GI herself has indicated that she made her decision based on program effectiveness, proximity to partners, and cost considerations, particularly those related to the desired future state of NGTOC. Stating that "the application of these factors were reasonable to help determine a site for consolidation of the NGTOC that would allow for meeting envisioned future needs of the program," the Review Team found that "the selection factors, supported by a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, were reasonably and rationally applied in the site selection process."

Finally, while the Review Team noted weaknesses in the coordination of internal communications, the report makes clear that these weaknesses did not compromise the ultimate finding of openness, fairness or transparency of the process nor did they demonstrate gaps in the basis for the decision itself. Rather, the Review Team states that "inconsistent and sometimes conflicting verbal communications to/from various executive levels and team leaders were without written confirmation and/or follow-up discussions to clarify intent." While according to the Review Team, "this led to the development of products and employee perceptions that did not accurately reflect the priorities of the bureau's leadership," the Review Team also found that from January 7, 2005, to August 10, 2005, "communications to and from field units at USGS were consistent, inclusive, fair, transparent and responsive," and that "The AD-GI adequately, consistently and clearly communicated her priorities and rationale for her decision to senior managers within the GIO and with the Acting Director, Deputy Director, and senior staff at several times during the period August 10, 2005, and September 15, 2005." Although documentation of the decision process after August 10, 2005, is limited, the Review Team found the level of documentation appropriate for a senior manager who was synthesizing the available information and applying her knowledge to the data to reach a decision. The Review Team concluded that "throughout the process the AD-GI's vision of desired future state for the NGTOC and the priority factors to achieve the vision remained constant and consistent."

### Conclusion

I supported the decision announced on September 15, 2005, to undergo an A-76 competitive sourcing study of the NGTOC function, and to locate the resulting NGTOC organization at the Denver Federal Center, and I continue to believe this is the best approach to sustaining a valuable, cost effective, and customer-focused program. Based on the findings of the Review Team, which validated the integrity of the decisionmaking process, I recommend that USGS proceed with our original recommendation for the planned A-76 process and location of the NGTOC function at the Denver Federal Center.



Concur

Non-Concur

Date

1/10/06